



CITY OF SIN

BOOK 04

Misty South

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

City of Sin

(罪恶之城)

by

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Synopsis

Every drop of this family bloodline is stained with sin. They are the embodiment of contradiction; calm yet maniacal, with great memories yet often forgetful. They pledge themselves to their dreams yet often compromise, are angels that are also devils... It's why I hate them. And also love them.

The only hope of his family, a youth with the blood of elves and devils walks on a battleground of annihilation and rebirth. He wills his way through boiling lava and icy depths, killing on this field of despair to strike down the lofty figure in his sight. One day he'll grasp his blade tightly and survey his surroundings, only to find no more enemies to kill.

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Book 4, Chapter 1 - Confusion And Responsibility

‘Norland’s orcs are more beautiful than foreign elves.’ Richard still remembered these words from Gaton. They were also the sole ironclad rule in planar war. If a passage was opened up between two planes, the only possibility was for one side to be wiped out.

However, Richard just couldn’t understand why things had to be this way. No matter how small the scale, a planar war would last decades and reap millions to tens of millions of lives. Still, he was not so rigid as to judge everything just based on his own feelings. As a powerful primary plane, Norland had built passages to thousands of other planes in history. The fires of war burnt without end here, while many planar battles lasted centuries. An invaded plane only had two options to regain peace: one was to be wiped out immediately, while the other was to submit and get assimilated. Since this was the case for so many planes, there had to be some reason for it. He couldn’t say planar war was wrong just because he didn’t know those reasons.

There had to be something that nobody wanted to point out. All nobles were educated on planar battles from their youth, learning to believe that conquering other planes was something as natural as breathing. It wasn’t just the nobles, every single powerhouse felt this way. Basically all of them had been tempered through planar battles, with every strong family possessing at least one plane of their own. That was the only way to establish a foothold in this land of perennial war.

Planar battle was an instinct of all the intelligent beings in Norland, not just humans. Elves, dwarves, orcs, barbarians... everyone wanted to conquer other planes. Looking at it from a broader perspective, this was true for all the other powerful primary planes as well.

Richard couldn't help but laugh, swirling the wine in his cup and downing most of it in one go. Norland had many millennia of history, he mocked himself, numerous geniuses had popped up over all this while. If they hadn't been unable to unravel the secrets of planar war and just immersed themselves in the fight, what was he doing letting his thoughts run wild? What right did he have to do this?

Without Faelor, his own strength would not have grown so rapidly. Without Faelor, he wouldn't have accumulated so much wealth in such a short period of time. He had the power to control his own fate as well.

As he lifted the bottle and refilled his glass, a series of numbers streamed past his mind. Numbers for runes, gold and other forms of wealth, his army, the growing strength of his followers and himself...

But most importantly of all, there was the casualty count.

He was in a very strange state, many uninvited thoughts surging through his mind. He finished all the wine in his cup and reached for the bottle again, but then he found it to be too light. It had already been emptied.

He shook his head, feeling like he was still sober. The anxiety burning in his heart was even more obvious now, growing difficult to endure. He couldn't understand what exactly his problem was.

He instantly took out a piece of blank paper, starting to doodle on it with the magic pen that never left his side. The doodle was a mixture of random curves, symbols, and numbers that covered a large portion of the paper, but even he himself didn't know what he was drawing. Still, when the paper was filled up he felt like something pressing on his mind had been transferred to the piece of magic paper.

He opened a bottle of whisky and poured himself a full glass, standing in front of the window and sipping it slowly. He didn't

know when, but as glass after glass of alcohol was drained that bottle was emptied as well, thrown into the corner.

Ting! A new bottlecap landed on the ground, bouncing a few times as it rolled towards a pair of pale little feet at the door. It struck a delicate-looking toe and finally became still, after which a tender hand picked it up to examine.

This was a pair of sky-blue eyes, sparkling and translucent like the purest of sapphires. Even the pickiest of people could not find any flaws with their appearance. Rosie's hair was let loose, resting on the shoulders of her long dress. Her feet didn't make any sounds as she entered the study.

The young lady smelled like nature, and had practically no presence. In the midst of his personal uproar, Richard hadn't noticed her arrival at all.

He couldn't remember just how much he'd drunk. Raising the glass to his lips, he found it to be empty. He wanted to look for more, but he couldn't even stand steadily anymore and had no choice but to place the cup on the ledge to stabilise himself. The bottle seemed to float over on its own, tilting and filling the cup.

He instinctively picked it up and drained it, only then wondering where exactly the liquor had come from. He turned and saw the bottle, as well as the beautiful hands holding it. His gaze slowly travelled along the arms and shoulders, eventually resting on Rosie's face.

He stared at her for a full half minute before frowning, "Rosie?"

The young lady nodded, standing there quietly.

He looked at the empty cup in his hand which had at some point stretched forward in front of her. Rosie immediately poured the alcohol into the glass, and he downed it all in one go before reaching it out again. She finally grew hesitant, speaking in a whisper, "You can't drink anymore..."

Richard's eyebrows furrowed, and the girl immediately gave up. This time, he didn't finish the glass in one go. He returned to the window, reaching out to point at the boundless starry skies, "You know, that man must have been standing here all the ti—"

Crash! The glass in his hand suddenly fell, his own body starting to sway before it followed suit.

Rosie immediately tried to help him, but his body weight was completely out of her expectations. She was brought to the ground as well.

Feeling strange, Richard struggled his way up. However, this meant he ended up crawling over his only support, Rosie's body. Their skin practically stuck together, and he could feel a euphoric combination of elasticity and toughness in her tall figure. His foot shifted unsteadily and he fell to the ground once more, subconsciously reaching out and grabbing onto Rosie's skirt. Her long dress was practically ripped apart in one go!

A long, straight leg as fair as snow appeared in front of his eyes, exposed all the way up to the thigh. Every part of Rosie's body was incredibly alluring, and his body stiffened as he forced himself up using the exposed leg. His grasp was very tight, causing the girl to tremble slightly.

Richard stood up straight, staring right into Rosie's eyes as he breathed out a strong odour of alcohol. Rosie had no expression on her face, but her gaze matched his without covering. Her pouty lips opened slightly, making it look like the pure, arrogant girl wanted to curse.

The sense of wrongness caused Richard to burst. "You want to die?" he forced out through gritted teeth before grabbing her collar and tugging hard. In one go he ripped through the rest of her skirt and even her bra, revealing a naked upper body.

In reaction, Rosie suddenly lowered her head and bit into his shoulder with all the strength in her body. Richard trembled and

screamed like an animal, but his body actually pressed further into her mouth.

He had gone insane, his rationality completely drowned out as he tried to find out if she could really cut through his flesh. The lady herself didn't hold back either, biting as hard as she could. However, every muscle on Richard's body was incredibly toned; now as hard as steel. Rosie's gums began to bleed, but she could not bite through his flesh.

She suddenly loosened her bite and stood in front of him, meeting his gaze expressionlessly. Her chin raised slightly, showing an ingrained arrogance.

This was a challenge of the highest level. 'I'm looking down on you,' it seemed to say, 'What can you do to me?'

Richard didn't say a word as he pulled her close, pressing her to the ground. A few tugs turned the last of her clothing into rags that fell on the ground, and struggle as she might it was all to no avail. Her eyebrows suddenly locked together, her head falling back as she produced a hoarse cry of pain. Her hands gripped Richard's body tightly, fingernails digging deep into the skin on his back.

A lonely boat weathered a storm that night, flung about the merciless waves that constantly rammed into her. She could no longer remain stoic, her brows locked together and her eyes tightly closed as guttural screams somewhere between crying and laughter rang from deep within her throat. The cries grew increasingly hoarse, her body twitching and trembling irregularly.

Rosie wanted to just break down and faint, but things did not go her way. Richard was like a surging mammoth atop her, fierce and cruel. It was hard to imagine such a powerful volcano in that seemingly frail body, but she felt like she had been pulverised.

It took some time for the storm to subside. Drained of all strength, Rosie lay on the ground ruined as she gasped for breath. Sweat started to pour out of her body once she relaxed, what

seemed like a waterfall from her forehead completely drenching her long hair. Richard was just as exhausted, falling deep asleep atop her. He even started to snore lightly.

Finally recovering some strength, Rosie tried to push him off. However, the moment she tried to move her brows twisted together and she couldn't help but loose a cry. Richard had ejaculated and filled her body, but his member was still as erect as ever; it was practically swollen to the limit within her body. The movement also affected all the sore parts of her lower body, making it feel like a million needles had poked her in a single instant.

She gasped, gritting her teeth and forcefully pushing him off. However, just that had turned her face pale.

Book 4, Chapter 2 - Confusion And Responsibility(2)

Forced onto his back, Richard started snoring thunderously. Even so his brows were tightly locked together, the face that was supposed to be young now with lines etched on its forehead.

A flurry of emotions surged through her eyes, delicate hands brushing at Richard's throat. Her hand suddenly posed like a knife, making a pretend-slash as she whispered, "I'll cut you!"

Richard had no reaction whatsoever, sleeping like the dead.

She ended up gazing at him quietly, her gaze slowly growing murderous. However, the moment she moved closer a great sense of danger enveloped her, a tremor shaking all of her body. No matter how hard she tried to find the source of this feeling, she just could not. Her hand was already at his throat; as long as she used some strength, she would be able to strangle him. And yet, her movements no longer had the bloodlust of before.

"Why am I doing this?" she muttered to herself, a mocking smile appearing about her lips, "Just for that bastard who wanted to sell me off?"

She hadn't noticed the dull red lustre emanating from the beast-tooth bracelet on Richard's wrist. As her own killing intent faded, the tooth at the top returned to normal as well.

Rosie's gaze swept past Richard's well-proportioned and fit body, landing on the culprit that had just left her on the verge of falling apart. It had done many wrongs, but it still stood tall as though showing off a victory. A faint flush rose on her face as she glared at the lethal weapon and gritted out, "I'll cut you off sooner or later!"

She then slowly crawled over and picked up Richard's outer robes, her own long dress now no more than a pile of torn cloth. While trying to adjust this new clothing, she suddenly saw the

dense scribbles on the magic paper that Richard had left on the table. Curious, she picked it up and looked through the text.

There were quite a few names on the paper: Sharon, Gaton, Elena, Flowsand, Mountainsea. Next to the names were many numbers and words; for instance, Sharon had ‘4 million every year’, ‘Sharon’s Delight’, ‘saint runemaster’, and ‘help you wake up’ next to her name. Near Gaton was ‘give back a more powerful Archeron Family’, ‘will get rid of you sooner or later’, and others. Next to Mountainsea was only one sentence, ‘Will come for you within five years.’

There were many simple yet powerful drawings on the paper as well. Sharon floating helplessly in the void. A barbarian girl’s back looking incredibly bleak and heavy as she was about to leave. Looking at this image, Rosie felt as though every step of the girl could shake the earth. Gaton was an indistinct bundle of flames, and all that was next to Elena was the outline of a volcano and fresh flowers at its mouth. Then there was Flowsand, a graceful figure standing before an altar with a strip of divine grace floating above her head.

These drawings were very concise, but every stroke was stifling. It was a complete eruption of all of Richard’s feelings. At this point, she suddenly understood that this paper showed all of Richard’s responsibilities.

She bit her lower lip, her gaze at the offender growing more complicated. Even she didn’t know exactly what she was feeling at that moment...

“You pig!” she finally gritted out, using all her strength to drag Richard to his bedroom. The room was right next door, but the few steps it took to get there left her in a cold sweat.

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It was only near noon the next day when Richard finally awoke from his drunken slumber. He had no idea that someone had called

him a pig last night, only feeling a splitting headache.

‘I should drink better stuff in the future, this is too uncomfortable!’ he thought as he rubbed his temples. As he stirred, he suddenly felt like there was someone sleeping next to him.

The tipsiness he was feeling completely dissipated as his body tensed, ready to deal a killing blow before he even opened his eyes.

Next to him, Rosie was curled up like a kitten, holding his arm tightly while deep asleep. She was completely naked, her perfect curves able to leave anyone breathless no matter what angle they saw her from. Although he had seen every part of her body already, Richard’s heart still fluttered.

But then, a thought came to mind: why was it her?

He could remember almost nothing of the last night. Even trying his best, he only managed to drag out a few fragmented images. However, those images left him shocked. So whatever was possible had happened?

‘Shouldn’t she be under house arrest?’ he suddenly remembered, ‘Why had she appeared in his study?’

However, as he watched the sleeping girl he felt unwilling to wake her. Lying down on the bed once more, he tried his best to remember the events of the last night.

A few minutes later, the sensitive young lady felt the difference in Richard and slowly woke up. The first thing she saw was Richard gazing at her closely, but her eyes remained clear and her expression dull. However, the purple marks dotting her snow-white skin illustrated how intense last night had been.

When Richard saw her wake up, his expression immediately turned frosty. However, that melted away into a calmness as he asked, “How did you get out?”

“Of the house arrest? Well, I convinced the old steward that I’m

harmless so he let me move around freely on the island. I can't leave, however."

Richard's expression chilled, "You're pretty good at persuading people."

"Indeed. Now everyone in the family likes me... Except you, that is."

"This isn't your family. Your surname is Mensa," Richard icily reminded her.

Rosie wasn't angered in the slightest, stating lightly, "Blood ties are an effective way of judging someone, but they aren't everything. I hear there are many with the Archeron name that have no honour either. This island is proof of my point."

"How does it prove anything?"

"Didn't you have the three knights kill over a hundred traitors? Isn't that proof enough?"

Richard had no answer to this question. This was one of the few times he was on the losing end of a verbal battle. He frowned, "Blood ties and surnames are still very important, especially for sense of belonging."

"All my surname gave me was a marriage to a sadistic old pervert. My entire value to the Mensas was in my face and future children. If I treasure this sense of belonging, should I marry that old coot Dario happily and die a few years later after all kinds of abuse? Do you really think that Mensa is the most important part of my name?"

Once again, Richard had nothing to answer her with. He had no choice but to admit that Rosie was very good at persuasion, including on himself. The only way to avoid it was to not let her open her mouth. His gaze swept past the bruises on her body as he feigned calmness, "Well, we seem to have done something last night. You..."

Rosie seemed to know everything he was thinking, answering dully, “It was my first time.”

The bluntness left Richard flustered and embarrassed, “That wasn’t what I meant.”

However, she took things even further. Supporting her upper body, she raised her left leg up high to reveal her most private area, speaking with an unperturbed voice that could make anyone fall apart, “You can check. It should still be on time.”

The outrageous action coupled with her calm expression became a stimulant difficult to resist. Richard’s body reacted before his mind, his member standing tall once more.

He fell into an outburst in the midst of his embarrassment, flipping on top of her and preparing to take her again as he stated vehemently, “Fine, I’ll check again!”

Of course, the two were talking about different kinds of checks. Probably.

Rosie closed her eyes, waiting quietly. However, the moment her slit was touched she couldn’t help but furrow her brows. Despite her best efforts to endure the pain, her hands subconsciously grabbed at the bedsheets. Last night had been far too rough, leaving her extremely sore. She still hadn’t recovered, but was about to be entered once more. The pain was sharp, like a knife cutting into her. No matter how cool she seemed, her body’s instincts could not be controlled.

Richard took one look at her face and immediately stopped his next movements, getting off the bed. Rubbing his forehead that was still throbbing, he stretched his back for a while before breathing out slowly. He turned towards Rosie once more, a complicated expression on his face as he said slowly, “I understand. I’ll think about it a little more, but you can stay here at ease. I’ll have the steward find a place for you to change.”

Rosie got off the bed as well, but her legs bowed at the first step. She nearly fell to the ground, but she tenaciously stood back up and told him, “My functions extend past the bed, you know.”

“I’m aware.” Having said this, Richard quickly wore his clothes and left the room. When the door closed behind him, he heaved a sigh of relief. Everything had happened too quickly and he’d had no time to think it through properly. In this situation, facing a girl like Rosie caused him too much stress.

Within the room, a slight smile appeared about the young lady’s lips, “Hmph, this will give you another responsibility!”

Just as she had said, Rosie’s greatest value was in political marriage. This was an age-old tradition with strict, established requirements. Before she was married, the girl had to maintain her purity; only after bearing the first heir to the other family could she begin to seek out lovers. Of course, that depended on the difference in influence between the two families.

Book 4, Chapter 3 - A Rune For The Legends

Given how weak Dario Schumpeter was, he wouldn't be able to stop Rosie from looking for lovers in the future, especially if they came from the Mensa Family. However, he would find a way to kill her off after she bore him a successor. This was an implicit condition when old Mensa had arranged her marriage to him.

Now, Rosie's 'greatest' value had been taken by Richard. Although this was deliberate on her end, Richard couldn't deny that he had benefited greatly. At the very least, he had enjoyed himself very much. All the way from forcing her to strip to the events of last night had been amazing. Even if he couldn't remember it all, he still felt that insane desire to fondle her to death.

Accepting her would evoke the wrath of the Mensas and Schumpeters, but those families were already at his throat anyway. He didn't mind adding another source of hostility between them; if he truly was afraid, he wouldn't have killed off Young Mensa and asked for Rosie to strip for him. That hadn't just been because she was at the scene.

His hesitation was more to do with his own psyche. He kept feeling like every step since Rosie had arrived on the Archeron island had left him in a passive state. No, perhaps ever since he won that battle of life and death, Rosie had prepared to follow up. If not for that, why had she repeatedly nagged him to let her follow him to a foreign plane? Her convenient appearance at the study last night was suspicious as well. If she had actually calculated the outcome of that meeting, then honouring the bet would be in her plans as well.

He wasn't afraid of having another shrewd woman by his side, but he didn't like being led by the nose. If not for Rosie repeatedly challenging him until he gave in to his rage, he likely wouldn't have done anything to her even when drunk.

He eventually just sighed. Since things had already happened, there was no point in lingering on these thoughts. He wasn't someone without any responsibilities, and Rosie was a negligible burden. Whether this burden was heavy or light depended on what position he gave her in his heart.

It was still early in the day. Richard called for a maid and got her to send Rosie a new set of clothes before heading to the study. The traces of chaos were still present, empty bottles strewn everywhere with his wine cup lying on the ground. There were even vestiges of the battle last night on the ground.

Without his permission, ordinary servants weren't allowed to enter this place. The room remained uncleaned this morning because of that, with the half-emptied bottle still on the desk. Standing in the middle of the room, he smiled wryly as he shook his head.

He then looked towards the table, dimly remembering that he had carelessly written some stuff down on a piece of paper. However, the magic pen was still on the table but the paper had vanished.

Richard froze, trying hard to remember what had happened. Where had the paper gone? The traces in the room showed that none of the servants had entered, and a thief with even a modicum of understanding of magic would have no reason to leave the legendary pen behind. On top of that, even at its worst, the Archeron Family wouldn't have let a thief enter the head's study.

Had he really not drawn those doodles? Perhaps he just had too much to drink and imagined it all, he told himself.

He'd sent someone to tell Nyris and Agamemnon when he came back, so when he called for the servants to clean the study the old steward hastened over with Nyris' reply.

There were few words in the letter, but one could tell from the tone that the Fourth Prince was in a great mood. He had invited

Richard to lunch together, asking with interest about the situation regarding the latest runes. He still had some time before then, so Richard muttered to himself for a bit and asked the old steward, “What’s going on with Rosie?”

The old steward smiled, “I believe she poses no threat to the Archerons, which was why I took it upon myself to let her move about freely on the island. It seems there are quite a few people in the family who like her.”

Richard snorted, “You think she’s harmless?”

“Yes. How can a level 8 mage pose any threat to the Archerons?”

The steward’s deceptive answer left Richard helpless. He frowned, “You’re giving her too much free reign. Last night...”

The steward laughed in an understanding manner, “I believe she made a huge contribution to the Archeron Family last night!”

Richard’s expression changed to one of confusion, “You think it’s a contribution?”

“Yes, a contribution!” the old man answered resolutely.

Richard couldn’t hold back the urge to rub his head, knowing that he couldn’t change the stubborn notions of this loyal coot. He could only sigh, “Fine then. Make the arrangements, I’ll meet Nyris in the afternoon.”

The lunch was in the same restaurant and room where he had first met Nyris and Agamemnon. The two were already waiting inside, but this time Richard also brought Fuschia along carrying a magic box. Within the box were three million gold’s worth of runes, something enviable even in Faust. If someone took the risk to steal it out of desperation or did something under the table, it would put him in trouble.

The lunch was the same as the last time as well. Nyris continued to eat as he spoke, and Fuschia had the same reaction as Richard, gaping and forgetting to eat herself. Agamemnon remained

taciturn, tending to his food.

Having been unlucky the last time, Richard would not make the same mistake now. As someone who had studied in the Deepblue, his appetite and eating speed did not lose out to theirs. The three swept through the food without any poise, not giving Fuschia any chances at all.

Nyris' eyes were clear as water, continuously casting glances at Richard in excitement. He was emitting an astounding charm, to the point that even Fuschia was no match. She continued to watch on, dumbstruck, while Richard started growing extremely uncomfortable under Nyris' burning gaze. He didn't notice the speed of his eating had lowered greatly.

"This guy just cleared his debt," Agamemnon suddenly interrupted, "He's just overexcited. Don't let it disturb you."

Richard immediately understood, immersing himself into the food once more. It was only Fuschia who maintained any form of elegance in the last seat, meaning she lost out. By the time the three swept through the table and started their discussions, she was only half full.

In the end, Richard couldn't watch further and called the servant to get dishes prepared just for her. Only then did the beautiful woman look slightly better. However, seeing Nyris smiling like the spring and even Agamemnon's lips curving upwards, he suddenly understood their intentions. These fellows actually wanted him to show off in front of her, but it cost him thousands of gold! Still, that was a small price to pay for the goodwill of someone so powerful. Many were willing to pay for such a chance.

Richard felt somewhat strange. Somehow, without even realising it, these two had built up a rapport with him over the few interactions they'd had.

The three left Fuschia to finish the new dishes while they discussed their own matters. For her part, Fuschia stopped caring

and released all her inhibitions, beginning to eat properly. Someone at her level naturally knew how good these foods were for her internal energy. What was dignity worth, anyway? When it came down to it, she was only in this situation because the others had swept away all the food in the first place.

Richard passed the magic box to Nyris, who opened it up and closely examined every rune. It took half an hour by the time he was done, saying with excitement, “The power of these runes is even greater than the last sets! Goodness, how long did it take?”

“It’s been four months on Faelor,” Richard said after some thought.

“Just four months!” Nyris shouted with a little exaggeration, pushing his seat closer to Richard’s, “If other runemasters want to improve their runes, they could take five to ten years! You used just four months? I don’t think it will be long until you start making the highest-quality composite runes as well!

“Right, do you know about the agility rune that appeared on the auction market a few years ago? It was unimaginable, able to be slotted into a hybrid slot but still almost matching a grade 2 rune! That rune has become a legend now, having sold for more than these three sets together. It was a piece of art! Richard, at the rate you’re improving, you could create a rune for the legends too!”

Richard gaped, a few garbled noises coming from his throat before he could only say, “I... I try not to deteriorate.”

Pak! Nyris slapped his shoulder hard, bellowing, “As a man, how can you be so ambitionless?”

This sudden fury from the Fourth Prince was full of charm. His eyes fluttered, nobility and beauty combining to make him seem more feminine than a woman. Fuschia, who had been immersed in her food, abruptly spat out a mouthful of soup!

The three men’s gazes immediately fixed onto her, leaving her

extremely embarrassed. Her right foot lifted slightly off the floor, ready to break through with a stomp and send her to the lower level where she could evade the eyes of these despicable creatures.

She was on the verge of going crazy. She just couldn't understand, the Fourth Prince looked surprisingly pretty and gentle, couldn't he just act gracefully like a proper royal? Why was he bellowing? THIS DIDN'T MAKE SENSE!

Having worked with her for a decent period of time now, Richard turned away. He switched the focus back to the discussion, growing serious once more. However, seeing Nyris' bitter gaze as though wishing for something better, he felt at a loss. He couldn't actually tell the Fourth Prince that this so-called rune for the legends was probably one of his creations, could he?

Book 4, Chapter 4 - The Burden Of The Powerful

The elementary agility rune had been a stroke of genius, but Richard's standards were steadily rising. If he was willing to spend the time on it, it wouldn't be impossible to reproduce. However, he didn't just create runes for money anymore; his goal was to create better rune knights and tailor-make runes for himself and his followers, constantly producing new rune sets. He didn't have the time to make numerous elementary runes for the low probability that one of them would sell for millions.

Many runemasters in Norland just created specialised workshops and built up stable trade channels, concentrating completely on research and improving their skills. However, this was not the path he had chosen for himself.

It wasn't as if nobody could make that elementary agility rune. Any saint runemaster or even a rather skilled great runemaster could create it, but they wouldn't waste their time doing so. The reasoning was the same as his; it wasn't worth it to make an entire pile of agility runes for the off chance that one of them was extraordinary. Although such a rune could be sold for millions, it was not so easily made. At the very least, Lunor would not be able to make them no matter how many years it took.

"He has something to ask you," Agamemnon couldn't watch Nyris' enthusiasm any longer, "That's why he's acting differently."

"Agamemnon, you! You!" Nyris was about to jump up, but when he turned around and saw Richard's expression he sat down in disappointment, "Alright, I do have something to ask of you. I want... I want—"

"He wants to join you in conquering planes."

Richard immediately frowned when Agamemnon completed the sentence, falling silent as he thought things over repeatedly to figure out Nyris' true motives. There were too many secrets in Faelor that could not be shared, and Nyris was a prince of the Alliance. Who knew if he was also competing to become the crown prince?

Nyris glared at Agamemnon angrily, as if wanting to slice him into millions of pieces. However, the powerful youth wouldn't care about such a painless threat, "His real intention is to earn some money warring alongside you to increase his influence and points."

"Points?" Richard was immediately confused. This sounded very much like something Sharon would do.

Explaining the system was too much of a waste of saliva for Agamemnon, so Nyris ended up having to explain the new point system of the royal family in detail. This included how achievements were graded, the time decay, the moving average, and even the distribution of benefits. This system was extremely complicated, evidently to get rid of the dumber children. It was also quite in the style of the Deepblue.

Nyris actually showed his own ability in being able to explain the system in a clear and concise manner, even adding his own thoughts on how to best make use of the rules. His conclusion was simple: participating in planar wars and improving his army would be the quickest methods to grow.

However, these were the most difficult methods as well. Even ignoring the uncertainty of profits from planar battle, he wasn't the only one competing for the throne. Becoming an outstanding commander or leader in planar battles was not enough; if one used too much energy there, they would lose the initiative in Faust. Thus, unless one could find a reliable and powerful agent, they normally wouldn't run off to develop a new plane.

In other words, the Emperor was training their ability to play

chess, not to fight as pieces on the board.

After explaining the point system, Nyris stared solemnly at Richard, “You must know, if you agree to this request the others will consider you to be in my camp. Their organisations will discriminate against you, and you could even be attacked. If you’re unwilling to involve yourself in the internal conflicts of the royal family, I completely understand.”

Richard remained still, his brows locked tightly as he thought through the pros and cons. He had no experience whatsoever in dealing with such high-level politics. Perhaps that man would have been able to give him some guidance if he was around.

“Only the weaker families avoid these sorts of struggles,” Agamemnon suddenly chimed in, revealing a sunny and calm smile, “Also, you’re only going to be representing your own branch of the family.”

The meaning behind these words was rather offensive. Agamemnon was saying he wasn’t yet the head of the Archeron Family. However, this was an undeniable truth. Although Richard was the one supporting the family right now, he didn’t have control over Gaton’s subordinates. The Ironblood youth was reminding him that his support to Nyris right now would be on an individual basis, not affecting the entire family. The losses wouldn’t be as great as he was imagining. The same was true of Agamemnon himself; his siding with Nyris did not mean the Ironblood Duke supported the Fourth Prince.

In simpler terms, there wasn’t much to lose but a lot to gain. It had to be said that Agamemnon had his way with words despite his reticence; every statement had a point.

Fuschia interrupted as well, “I agree. Choosing a prince to support is the right and obligation of every powerful family. It is our duty to help the Alliance acquire the most suitable ruler.”

Richard made up his mind. While Agamemnon talked about

branches and Fuschia brought up responsibility, their meaning was the same. It all boiled down to power. Even if he supported the wrong person, the new emperor would still have to rethink his options as long as the Archerons were powerful enough. On top of that, it wasn't rare for different branches of a noble family to have conflicting opinions. The emperor was only the highest of the nobles, and the royal family wasn't even the oldest of the lot.

“Alright. What can I get from this?”

Nyris was immediately delighted, “You need to provide a plane that has value in being developed, and we'll fight together on it. In return, I'll provide the blessing of Unhurriedness for the plane and give you half of all the profit it ever makes.”

“Deal,” Richard didn't overthink the gains and losses, “I'll give you the Forest Plane, the one we went to last time.”

“Hmm? Isn't Faelor your main plane? But then again, the Forest Plane is very valuable too. Pity, the Schumpeters spent more than a decade but didn't obtain much profit. It's said that the natives there are very troublesome.”

“The situation in Faelor is stable right now, and I need some time to digest its profits. Starting another war there isn't the best idea.”

Nyris exchanged glances with Agamemnon before asking, “Will you come with us?”

“Of course!” Richard smiled in answer.

After coming to a decision on the most important matters, the three grew more relaxed and began to chat idly. Of course, it was Nyris talking 80% of the time while Richard could only add a few sentences where he could. Agamemnon was taciturn as usual as well, letting the prince have his spotlight.

The two figured out that Richard was slightly off and asked about it, but he just smiled wryly and explained that he was always feeling on the edge as of late. They seemed to fall deep into

thought, looking at each other before Agamemnon nodded slightly. Nyris told Richard that he had a way to solve his problems, but that would only come after some time.

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By the end of the lunch, Richard had ordered another batch of weapons and equipment. Preparing for planar wars took time, So Nyris went off to gather his army in ten days. The Prince also needed to host an offering ceremony for the Unhurriedness blessing as well.

After dinner that night, Richard received a letter from Beye. There was only one sentence within, "Tomorrow at noon, I'll bring you to the Battlefield of Despair for a look."

Battlefield of Despair! This was a furnace that trained saints, the best way to become a legendary being. Almost all of Norland's powerhouses in the past century had been trained there, the only exception being Sharon. Of course, the legendary mage had abruptly put herself on the map with the construction of the Deepblue, seemingly never needing to train. She quickly suppressed the duergar with great power, after which she naturally became a legend. She still retained a showy manner, possessing a terrifying power that surpassed her peers greatly. There was no lack of other legendary beings that had been traumatised by her.

While Beye didn't mention it, Richard knew she was likely here at Agamemnon's request to help solve the issues with his psyche. Although he didn't understand what his problems had to do with the Battlefield of Despair, that was a trip he could not miss. He called the old steward to his study and passed him a list of extremely potent items, asking him to purchase them all by noon the next day. The Archeron Family had no ability to produce these potions that were easily 10,000 gold each, and with the family scrounging for money right now they didn't have any in storage either.

Book 4, Chapter 5 - Entering The Battlefield Of Despair

Anything could happen on the Battlefield of Despair, and there was no harm in preparing more. As a royal runemaster, Richard didn't really mind a small investment of a few hundred thousand gold.

It was late into the night, but his study was still lit. Now facing the map of the Forest Plane, he marked out a few new spots on it. Next to the map was another request for help from Lina. The tone of this letter was quite different from the last. She mentioned several vigorous attacks from the natives over the past month, leading to massive casualties. She had only kept the defensive line intact with the power of the three towers, and if the situation continued she wasn't certain that the plane would still be in their hands within two months.

On the second page of the letter was the latest chart of the enemy troops and her own. One could tell with a single glance that Emerald City was completely surrounded; there weren't too many natives, but their attacks were unrelenting and unpredictable.

Updating the map of the Forest Plane, Richard silently simulated the situation in his mind. A while later, he shook his head, "No, it isn't yet time. Hmph, does she still want to trick me? She's nowhere near such dire straits and can probably hold on for another half year. Three magic towers with her in charge... How would the natives break through without giving up their lives?"

Now that he could set aside his worries, he cleaned up the table and headed to the highest tower of the castle. He began to meditate in the spacious room, trying to ensure he was in his best state before going to the Battlefield of Despair.

He remained silent through the night.

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Eleven the next day, a small squad from the Duke Ironblood's family came to escort Richard. Two of the three teleportation gates to the Battlefield of Despair from Faust were on the imperial islands, while the other was controlled by the Ironblood family. The only other options were having a spatial mage build a temporary portal or looking elsewhere.

Half an hour later, Richard was stood outside the door to a little shrine on island 5-5. The shrine was constructed from black rock, and he could smell a heavy scent of blood within.

"You're early," Beye's voice rang out from afar.

"Your men came to get me."

Beye's response to this held a strange tinge of bloodlust, "That's wrong. You knew the destination, so you should be able to figure out how long it would take to get here. I clearly sent my people half an hour early; you should have corrected them, not accommodated them. In the Battlefield of Despair, you should make good use of every resource if you want to survive. Time is one of the greatest."

Richard's heart trembled. This woman was already guiding him.

"Since there's still time, show me the equipment you've prepared." Beye had Richard show her all his equipment, including the Twin of Destiny and Extinction. Glancing through them, she started berating him, "No, you can't bring these! Ag, take these things and return them to Richard when we're back."

She then pointed to the Book of Holding, "This is the only thing you can bring."

However, Richard was shocked. Losing his staff and best sword would drop his battle might by at least 40%. Wasn't the Battlefield of Despair a land of death? Why couldn't he bring his equipment?

Beye seemed to know what he was thinking about, suddenly pulling down her collar to reveal a complicated grade 4 rune that

covered most of her shoulder, “If you wish to go further in the Battlefield of Despair, if you wish to live forever, you can only rely on yourself. The most you can have is your runes, but even those you cannot depend on at all times. Only when you forget about your equipment and learn to fight without it will you truly walk the path of the strong. That’s when you’ll have the qualifications to wield these things again. This is the equipment I plan to use.”

She tossed a pair of daggers towards him, and a cursory examination revealed that there was nothing to them outside of being made from lafite. Although they were durable and wouldn’t rust easily, they held no other merit. When he returned them to her, astonished, she casually sheathed them and continued, “Secondly, forget your identity as a mage. As long as you can kill your opponent, anything goes.”

Having said this, she headed into the shrine without caring whether Richard actually understood her words. Some mages had already placed magic crystals in the centre of the teleportation formation within.

“Let’s go!” She stepped into the formation right away, not taking anything outside of the two daggers. Richard hesitated for a moment before following.

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As the light of the teleportation faded, Richard found himself deep inside a cave. Seeing him step out of the portal, Beye quickly gestured him over with her back bent slightly, walking soundlessly to one corner of the cave. He looked back in shock, unable to believe that the formation on the other side was just a messy array of rocks piled on the ground.

But then he realised it was just a pile of rocks. The last vestiges of mana within the stones rapidly dissipated, leaving them no different from the rest of the hill. There was no formation here at all.

Beye didn't need to turn back to guess what he was doing, "There's no need to look anymore, the place we teleport to changes every time. This time I had us sent directly to the edge of the battlefield, so we don't have to rush. We'll need to head to the Capital of the Unsetting Sun to return, they have a gate back to Norland there. Be careful, we could meet enemies at any point.

"Where do these enemies come from?" Richard inquired.

"I'll explain it to you along the way. First, check your current condition. This is a place where you could easily lose your meagre life. Pay attention to every detail. I'm helping you with your first time, so learn to take care in the future.

"Stand straight!" Beye walked up to his side, her slender and powerful hands starting to wander over his body as they squeezed and checked every inch of his body. Her movements were steady as she adjusted everything, from the buttons on his shirt to the items in his pocket. She didn't even let his member off, casually squeezing it.

Still at an age where he was very hot-blooded, Richard sucked in a breath. He naturally had a reaction down under as well, one that caused Beye to pause as she teased, "Not many can get hard in front of me. Should I praise you for being courageous or call you insane?"

He turned slightly red, not making a sound, but she patted his erect penis, "Take care of it. Its current condition will affect your balance during battles."

Richard had to admit that her adjustments immediately left him more comfortable. Although she hadn't put much pressure into it, all of his tense muscles had been relaxed. He had never felt so good in his life. He didn't forget to record everything with his blessings, making a note to analyse it in the future.

At this moment, the only equipment he had on himself was the Book of Holding and an ordinary steel dagger. Beye quickly

organised her own simple equipment before leading him deeper into the cave.

The cave was quite large, feeling like a natural maze. The walls and ground were made of malm, and the terrain was quite complicated. There were forks in the path everywhere as well as multiple levels. It was sometimes dry and sometimes damp, giving rise to different flora as well. Moss glowed in some parts of the place, giving it some light, while many paths were pitch-black without any light at all. However, the air was not stifling or musky. A breeze blew in from time to time.

Be it bright or dark, Beye continued to move noiselessly at the same speed. The terrain and lighting seemed to have no effect on her, the changing speeds of the wind no matter at all. Richard was beginning to feel strained as he followed, but observing her movements from behind he felt increasingly surprised and gained more insight.

Her movements were relaxed, elegant yet powerful. It was as though she had merged into her surroundings, advancing in a natural, flowing manner like a spider moving along its web. She adjusted her condition and path constantly, the bursts of movements leaving him feeling enlightened. He started trying to imitate her.

“Have you never learnt martial arts? Walking like this is quite basic.”

“I learnt some techniques from the underworld before, but that’s it. My teacher just gave me financial aid and let me develop freely.”

Beye went silent for a while, “Right, you’re her student. That’s normal; she only needs to put in a bit of effort to kill someone. She’s not like us, who have to train in various techniques and hatch infinitely many schemes to do so.”

Richard hadn’t expected even Beye to be so convinced by Sharon’s methods. He suddenly remembered that the last time

he'd seen her, he'd had the guts to touch her and even play around with a strand of her hair. Although she was deep asleep, how could she not have any methods to protect herself? That weak and adorable appearance was just a facade, her true might comparable to a dragon's. In that case, wouldn't so much as a pat from her hand have broken his bones and torn his muscles apart?

He suddenly broke out in cold sweat.

Book 4, Chapter 6 - Entering The Battlefield Of Despair(2)

“Your sweat will attract enemies that track their prey via scent, you need to control it,” Beye stated coldly from up ahead. Richard felt awkward and quickly agreed, tightening up his muscles and pacing himself to control his heart rate and blood flow. Most others would need to train in such thing for a long time, but given his underworld techniques and the time he had spent trying to imitate Beye already combined with the blessing of truth, he was quickly able to control himself.

“Not bad, you learn quickly.” Beye even gave him a compliment.

The two crossed through the cave system for an entire hour before Beye slowed down, “It’s safer here, I can explain the situation.”

She elaborated that there were multiple Battlefields of Despair. This one was called the Land of Dusk, formerly an expansive and powerful plane. However, it was connected to two primary planes, Norland and Daxdus, and amidst unending wars its civilisation had been completely wiped out. The armies of both primary planes met in the centre of this plane, erupting in an earth-shattering war that lasted centuries. Almost all of the natives had been destroyed.

The powerhouses of the two planes continued to battle in various corners of the continent. One blow at full power was enough to shift mountains and form new seas, wiping out all nature. The ones that dealt the largest blow were the legendary mages, constantly extracting the ambient mana to fuel terrifying spells against their opponents.

As the source energy of the plane died out, all life gradually banished. The plane slowly became a dead land, becoming unsuitable for lower forms of life. The only remaining value was its link between Norland and Daxdus, the long period of battle

making the passages incomparably stable. This turned it into a natural battlefield. Such was the origin of the Land of Dusk, one of the Battlefields of Despair.

Teleportation gates from the two primary planes were now spread across the place. Outside of a few large fortresses, every inch of this continent was unsafe. Enemies were around every corner.

Both sides found that traditional armies could not outdo their opponents, so they stopped sending out cannon fodder and instead started fighting with saints as the main forces. This was one of the most brutal, true versions of planar war.

“Why kill each other with saints?” Richard asked in doubt, “Is there anything on this plane worth occupying?” He had seen pitifully few life-forms during their walk, and all of them were creatures with no intelligence to speak of. This was vastly different from Norland’s Underdark, which held powerful races and civilisations that could hold their own on the surface.

He hadn’t seen any ores of value either, and although there were quite a few streams the currents were filled with a metallic poison that few could tolerate. Just like Beye had said, this was a plane on the brink of death with nothing of value.

“To wear them out,” was Beye’s answer.

“Wear them out?”

“Yes. We want to kill the powerhouses on the other side to deplete all of their resources. Norland and Daxdus have been at war for over a thousand years and know the coordinates of each other well. However, teleporting into another primary plane is basically suicide. The Battlefield of Despair is the best way of wearing out the enemy. The birth of every saint or legendary being takes an inordinate amount of resources, so we fight here to make each other bleed. Once one side cannot take it anymore, they’ll lose their footing in the battlefield and the situation will turn very

dangerous. The Land of Dusk will become one of the best fortresses of the attacking army, allowing them to send an unending stream of soldiers over to the other side.”

Beye glanced at Richard, “That is why your primary responsibility on the Battlefields of Despair is to survive. The second and third are also to survive.”

She then pointed ahead, “Have a look, this is the true appearance of the Land of Dusk.”

Richard walked in the direction she had pointed, circling past a bulky stone pillar to come out onto a cliff. Everything suddenly opened up, showing a gigantic world where the rugged earth merged into the skies in the distance. The ground was a dark grey, black regions dotting it everywhere like injuries that were yet to heal. The huge, dried-up riverbed in front of him was like a gaping injury; nobody could see its start and end.

The withered riverbed was at least a few dozen kilometres wide, over a hundred kilometres at its broadest. If not for the land on either end, he would even have suspected that this was not a river but a strait!

The sky was dull, almost entirely covered in thick, ashen clouds. From his perspective, it was a huge wall of black with few gaps between that left one unable to tell how the sky actually looked. Blood-red light shone down from the gaps, dyeing the earth a rich red.

The crimson light illuminated very little of the ground, leaving the rest as dark as night. However, pitch-black wasn't the only colour of the land; splendid auroras could be seen flickering around the place, incomparably magnificent. However, looking at these strips from a distance, Richard felt a chill run down his spine.

These ribbons of light were similar to those in the depths of the Land of Turmoil, a condensation of energy from rifts in spacetime.

They looked thin, but each one could potentially contain an entire plane within. These rifts led to other continua; once caught within, there was no way to know where one would end up.

Outside of these strips, one could see other specks of light flickering across the dark earth from time to time. These were lights produced by magic or battle; to be seen from several thousand metres away, they had to possess the power of grade 8 spells at minimum. There were even radiant flashes of light amongst the clouds; the people in battle there might not be legendary beings, but they weren't far from.

An indescribable scene straight out of the apocalypse, a combination of chaos, darkness, violence, and despair. The smell of blood and fire everywhere, with no sign of life to be seen. This was the Land of Dusk, the Battlefield of Despair.

Daxdus was a little similar to Norland, but the main elements there were chaos and darkness. Its inhabitants were humanoid as well, but affected by the energy of chaos they were taller, stronger, and more violent. The civilisation was quite advanced as well, but while Norland placed equal importance on social status and power, they only cared about the latter. In Beye's words, the inhabitants looked like chimeras formed of humans and various monsters.

"Let's go, we need about ten days to get to the capital of the Unsetting Sun and return via the portal there. You'll definitely meet many of Daxdus' claws along the way, so there are plenty of chances for you to widen your perspective." Having said this, Beye jumped off the cliff. Falling a few dozen metres from the sky, she twisted her body mid-air and rammed one arm into the cliffside. Displaying extreme control over her body strength, she used her arm to counteract gravity and keep her movement steady. Whenever she slowed down too much, she relaxed her hold and started dropping faster. Whenever it was so fast it grew dangerous, she gripped harder to slow the fall. In the blink of an eye, she had disappeared from Richard's line of sight.

Richard wanted to cast a featherfall spell and go down, but the speed of his fall would be far too slow to match Beye's. Besides, it also showed a lack of adaptability. If there was an enemy hidden below, a mage floating down would be an easy target. He clenched his teeth and gave up on the easy way, copying Beye's actions in jumping down the cliff. He obviously couldn't sustain a near-vertical drop like her, so he dropped a few metres at a time before grabbing the cliff walls. This was much slower, but it was better than floating down.

After sliding down a few thousand metres his body grew more coordinated. His decisions to land were coming faster and more precise, and his speed slowly increased. Still, it took a lot of effort to make it to the bottom of the cliff.

When he crawled up to stand, a strong smell of blood assaulted his nostrils. Beye was already done with a battle, cutting up a body a few dozen metres away. This was a mouse-like creature that was nearly a metre long, but its head was similar to a human's.

Her daggers moved quickly, separating the bones, meat, and skin while leaving blood splattering all over the ground. Richard had no idea what methods she was using, but there was very little blood left on the back of the skin. It was almost at the level of processed hide.

Beye picked up the creature's bones and teeth, carving out a few black crystals that looked like diamonds. She kept the crystals in her pocket before wrapping up the rest in the skin, turning it into a small sack that she put on her back.

Book 4, Chapter 7 - The First Battle In The Land Of Despair

“Slow,” Beye only took one look at Richard, “But thankfully not stupid. At least you knew to climb down yourself and not cut corners with the featherfall spell.”

Finally receiving some praise from her, Richard felt a little smug inside. His gaze shifted to the creature she had broken down, “What is this? A local monster?”

“No. This is a skaven, a native of Daxdus. These mouse-human hybrids are the lowest level of warriors in the Land of Dusk. They aren’t particularly strong, but they have a knack for survival and camouflage and can breed well. Their numbers keep increasing, so you can see them everywhere.”

Beye then raised the hide bag in her hand, “A skaven’s teeth can bite through lafite and its bones are tough, light, and easy to process into high-grade shafts for enchanted arrows. Its skin is equivalent to that of a top-quality magic beast hide, second only to earth dragons.

“As for the black crystals within its bones, that is the method those of Daxdus use to store their energy. They can be used as a substitute for magic crystals; even the lowest grade that comes from a skaven is equivalent to a few standard magic crystals.”

“Wow,” was all Richard could muster in response. He was feeling somewhat strange. Those of Norland normally treated intelligent life completely differently from magic beasts. Even when orcs, trolls, ogres, or the like were killed in battle, their bodies would just be buried and not used. Most non-human species had some value to be harvested from their bodies, but burying them was a form of respect for a worthy opponent.

This skaven was one of the opponent’s warriors as well.

Although it was easy for Beye to kill it, its species wasn't as weak as it seemed. The skaven could reach level 16, had strange attack patterns, and were large in number. If a dozen or so attacked together, even a high-level saint would have to flee immediately. They might appear ugly from a human perspective, but they were still a sentient lifeform. The very fact that their numbers were still increasing in a Battlefield of Despair was enough proof of how terrifying they were.

Such an opponent qualified for equal treatment. The norm would just be to leave their bodies behind, but Beye was treating this one like any other magic beast. Seeing how skilful she was at it, this wasn't the first time she had done this either nor was she the only one.

She started to continue forward, explaining things at the same time, "Daxdus is similar to the abyss and the hells. The powerhouses there rarely use armour, relying on the might of their own bodies. Moreover, most of them directly swallow various kinds of minerals and absorb the essence to strengthen their own bodies; some of their number can be considered walking warehouses of rare minerals. But their strength is proportional to their value; those warehouses also have terrifying abilities that one cannot easily match."

Richard listened silently to her guidance, absorbing all the knowledge he could. The two ran through the ashen land in tandem as Beye taught him another practical technique to remain rather quick but match his energy drain to his natural recovery.

An ear-piercing roar suddenly rang out from nearby, following which the ground began to rumble and quake. A thunderous sound of hooves reverberated through the air.

The two daggers leapt into Beye's palms and she gestured for Richard to distance himself, "It's a captain of the enclave centaurs. This will be a tough opponent, careful!"

It wasn't long before an enormous figure charged over. This person looked only vaguely similar to Norland's centaurs, his height of over four metres making both Richard and Beye look like children. He seemed more like an elephant-hybrid than a horse.

His lower equine body had six legs, and the human upper half had four arms each of which held a heavy weapon. The horse-half had long, thick fur with metal plates draped on it, but these plates seemed more for decoration than anything else. Most inhabitants of Daxdus liked shiny or glossy things, and the fur on an enclave centaur's body couldn't be cut through even by a normal enchanted weapon anyway.

Just from appearance alone, one could tell this person came from a race that held strength in the highest regard. His speed was outstanding as well; he had to be level 19 at minimum. Seeing Beye in his path, the enclave centaur raged with words Richard could not understand. Two of the weapons in his arms slammed into each other, causing a loud boom that left Richard dizzy for a moment.

The captain then rushed forward, four arms landing a shower of blows on Beye. In his eyes, Richard who had already retreated about twenty or thirty metres away was clearly a negligible character.

For his part, Richard had shot off a slowing spell the moment the centaur made his move. However, even though a yellow light lit up on the opponent's body, there were no signs of him slowing down at all. The magic resistance was so high the curse had basically no effect.

Beye somehow escaped from the range of the centaur captain, appearing at his waist which was difficult for him to attack. He let out a mad roar, turning with great strength to send a hammer smashing towards her head. However, she flashed a few metres away with a single step, occupying another gap in the attack. The enemy's hammer crushed the ground and sent splinters flying,

leaving a huge pit that was over ten metres wide on the ground.

Although he was rather shocked by this enemy's strength, seeing that Beye was in no danger Richard's worries slightly eased. He began to prepare a chant.

Only after arriving at the Battlefield of Despair had Richard found out that the spells he had stored in the Book of Holding were useless. Forget the small and fast raptors from Nature's Beckon, even a tall and strong wyvern would not be able to match a single swing of the centaur captain's hammer. Only an earth dragon, a creature with true dragon blood, would have any chance of resisting. As for attack spells, the damage dealt by grade 7 magic was nothing in the face of such a terrifying powerhouse. It would take the Twin of Destiny and a full-power use of Sacrifice to render the centaur captain half-dead, but even so he would still be able to cut a fragile mage apart seven or eight times.

Instant death spells like the Finger of Death or Spirit Lash were only useful on the weak. When cast on someone like the centaur captain, those effects would not come into play at all. Without the instant death effect, these spells couldn't compare to a more standard grade 7 attack spell. Burst fireballs might have been the answer, but they covered a huge area that would certainly envelop Beye. She had great strength, but the endurance of her flesh was no match for that of the centaur.

In desperation, he was chanting a spell he had never used before. With the enemy not caring about a mere grade 7 spell or a weak level 13 mage, he managed to complete it in a few seconds without any interruption.

A ray of strong magical light suddenly flashed over the centaur's head, forming a translucent coffin that encased his entire body. This was Tomb of Light, a spell dedicated to restraining and attacking creatures of darkness. Leaning towards the power of the divine, it could cause chaos within the energy pools of those from a plane of darkness like Daxdus, causing damage and even limiting

their movements.

The centaur captain grew still just as expected. However, that state only lasted a second before he immediately let out a wild roar, energy surging out of his body to disperse the spell in a flash. Tens of wounds had already been split open on his upper body, fresh blood flowing out, but to someone of his power they were no worse than the wound a human would suffer if scratched by a fruit knife.

Seeing his spell doing far worse than expected, Richard's expression warped. He couldn't think of any other methods. However, Beye chose just that moment to strangely lean under the lower body of the centaur captain, and a wave of intense breaking and snapping sounds immediately made their way to his ears. It made his skin crawl.

The enclave centaur suddenly let out an earth-shattering shriek, his thick legs that looked like stone pillars deforming in an instant as his body collapsed with a loud thud. The rocks beneath were crushed to dust as he howled, twisting in unbearable agony. He even abandoned his weapons, hoping to use his arms to prop himself up, but with its joints completely destroyed that was an impossibility.

Beye appeared before the centaur captain like a ghost, the daggers in her hands piercing into his open mouth like a flash of lightning. They twisted around as they explored his insides for a bit before she quickly pulled them out, withdrawing ten metres away. The centaur's movements grew stiff, limbs twitching involuntarily as the light in his eyes dimmed.

She looked at Richard and shook her head, causing him to force out a laugh. Seeing her destroy the centaur's legs in a flash, he knew that his spell was completely unnecessary. It would have been better to cast an agility or iron skin spell on her, but even that would just be a waste of mana. What he should have done was simply nothing, sitting and watching her kill.

Only after witnessing this battle did he truly understand just how terrifying Beye was.

Book 4, Chapter 8 - Born For Battle

Beye had unparalleled explosive strength and speed, her skill so great it made one's hair stand up in rage. Even analysing her actions using Precision, Richard could find no room for improvement at all. Although she was only level 18, just having entered sainthood, her true might could not be explained by her level. A single strike of hers could be extraordinarily powerful.

This was just like how he himself could use Blaze to decimate a mage of the same level as himself, or how Outburst allowed him to kill those who were a level or two higher.

Now he learnt why she was so obsessed to Life's Bane. The rune was simply tailor-made for her talent, boosting her fierce strength and speed until she became a storm of death on the battlefield.

Thinking of these things, Richard's gaze towards Beye somewhat changed. However, his eyelids suddenly twitched; she had already begun to dismember the centaur captain's corpse. With the enclave centaurs being much larger than the skaven, she had to spend more time to extract all the useful bits from it. However, looking at the valiant opponent being dismembered under the force of her daggers, he felt like puking.

It didn't seem like there were many areas on the centaur captain's body that could be used, Beye only took out his heart. However, just to collect the black crystals, she had turned this elephant of a creature into a pile of meat. "Enclave centaurs are two levels higher than skaven," she exclaimed mechanically, "They are one of the main forces of Daxdus and a core strength in the Land of Dusk. Captains like this one are amongst the upper-middle echelons of their forces, so we'll get many more opportunities to fight them. Actually, this body would have many uses. The skin is a good material to make high-quality leather armour from, and their spines can be refined into epic-grade pikes. The heart, which is the source of an enclave centaur's strength,

can even be used as an offering. However, the skin and spine take up far too much space. With you here, I can only give up on them.”

Offering! Richard hadn’t expected the centaur captain to have such great value. Were the other Daxdus powerhouses of a similar level also able to produce offerings?

Beye read him like a book, “As long as they achieve a certain level, most inhabitants of Daxdus have their power gather in one of their organs. These organs can be used as offerings to the Church of the Eternal Dragon.

“Normally, the only way for an independent saint to acquire an offering is the Battlefield of Despair. Otherwise, it might take an entire lifetime to gather enough for a single low-level ceremony. Take this heart, for example. You only need two to conduct a lesser ceremony once. This is why a saint that has survived the Battlefield of Despair is generally much stronger than one who has never entered it.”

Richard immediately understood that this was the main attraction of the Battlefield of Despair. Having seen that incredible list of blessings before, he knew just how wide of a range they could cover. Even a peasant without any talent whatsoever could be turned into a saint as long as one had enough divine grace.

The centaur’s body also had dozens of times the number of crystals the skaven did. It wasn’t a small harvest, but the reward was directly proportional to the difficulty. The centaur captain had been completely deserving of his level.

Beye and Richard continued to advance, and it didn’t take long before they encountered another battle. This time, it was a sksar ursa warlord, a character not much weaker than the centaur.

Richard entered the battle this time as well, but it was not as a mage. He buffed himself up with several spells before prowling around the edge of the battlefield with his dagger, looking for an opportunity to deal a fatal blow.

This enemy was close to three metres tall, cracks all over his hard skin that was similar to plate armour. He had an astonishingly large head covered in stiff black fur, the long mouth full of fangs some of which protruded out of the corner of his lips. It was said that these humanoids could break down obsidian weapons with a single bite, their name coming from the fact that their heads looked similar to those of bears.

Everyone in the Battlefield of Despair normally moved independently, something especially true for someone as fierce as Beye. Richard was the first person to see exactly how hard the ursa warlord got in front of her, and with his memory not being inferior to her battle might the scene was burned into his mind. Once they arrived at the capital of the Unsetting Sun, he would find out that an ursa warlord's member would grow to the maximum length their target could accommodate. This was equivalent to knowing some intimate details about her, but it would only leave him breaking out in a cold sweat. Were she to catch wind of it, he wouldn't even know how he died.

He made some progress in the battle, using the Greenflame Sword spell to enhance his own weapon before stabbing it into the root of the ursa warlord's tail where its defences were weak. He left behind a small wound that was only two finger-widths broad, no worse for the ursa than a mosquito bite, but to him it was a marked improvement. Beye had said before that killing did not distinguish between magic and martial arts, and this was the first step on that road.

The rest of the journey was equally exciting. After the ursa warlord they fought a wanga black sorcerer, a five-metre-tall creature that was slender as a rod covered in strips of black cloth from head to toe. Then came a manos lizard, a kind of draconic reptilian that was similar to draconians but much taller and more powerful. There was also a lightning drake, tens of metres long and floating a hundred metres up in the air. These were only the

more fierce of the lot; there were dozens of weaker ones like the skaven that were completely destroyed.

The two had met an enemy almost every hour or two. Beye didn't disappoint Richard at all, showing him the fierceness of someone born for battle. Every weakness, every vital point was exploited to the fullest; given that the genitalia of many creatures were relatively weak, she focused a lot of her attacks on that region as well. Richard had seen her destroy reproductive organs far more than once.

The harvesting post the battle was also an essential procedure. Some of the enemies were extremely similar to humans, like the tomiller devils who were basically the same except for glowing eyes and curved horns on their foreheads. Beye dismembered them all the same. The power core in their abdomens could be turned into part of an offering, and their flesh and blood were rich in the black crystals.

By the time he had seen her do this, Richard had been numbed to the fact. The only thing he saw was Beye's bag growing in size even as she abandoned more and more of the loot. She had only brought one spatial ring that she used to store the most expensive crystals and offerings. While he himself one that could hold half a cubic metre's worth of materials, its level was too low. With the latent power in all these things, it wouldn't serve its function of reducing their weight at all. In a place like this where danger lurked around every corner, any excess baggage could be the difference between life and death.

The enchanted case with image diamonds embedded within would actually have worked for the job, but it was just too cumbersome for the Battlefield of Despair. Beye naturally hadn't allowed him to bring it along on their journey.

Of course, he had his own harvests as well. He was starting to leave a mark on the enemies by the later battles, but that was all he could do given the difference in level. His attack power and

reaction speed could not compare to those of the enemy; if not for the crushing advantage of Beye on his side, even a skaven could have killed him.

Battle, rest, advance, battle... This was the cycle that continued throughout their ten days together.

Book 4, Chapter 9 - The Capital Of The Unsetting Sun

Richard had learnt a lot over the past ten days, his aura transformed by the experience. His skill in battle had advanced rapidly, but even more important than that was the strengthening of his will. He had no idea how to quantify such a gain, but it was a true harvest. After all, watching someone take apart the body of an opponent was not easy. However, the anxiety he'd been feeling over the past month or so had gradually disappeared as well.

Dusk the tenth day, the capital of the Unsetting Sun finally appeared on the horizon. This was a gigantic city that covered an entire mountain peak, the most striking building of which was a towering spire. This spire was nearly a thousand metres tall, its tip radiating a beautiful show of light.

This tower should have disappeared into the clouds, but all above the city was a huge gap in the continuous wall of grey. The blood-red light scattering down covered the entire city in a blood-like lustre. It was magnificently strange from the distance, looking like a land punished by the gods.

After ten days of learning to run properly, Richard could now match the broodmother's flight speed without losing any stamina for a long period of time. However, it still took a full two hours from when they saw the city to actually standing in front of its gates.

Looking at the fifty-metre height of the two city gates, he felt absent-minded. They were carved out of the natural rocks of the plane, magic patterns winding all through them with no signs of being stitched together and no gaps. It was an uncanny level of workmanship. These gates could not be controlled by a regular saint; even a legendary being would face some difficulty in opening or closing them without the help of their mechanisms. This

showed the power and background of the Unsetting Sun.

Four guards were stood outside the gates, all of them saints that were not lower in level than Beye herself. However, when they saw her approaching, their faces filled with reverence and they stood even straighter, not daring to breach etiquette. Richard noticed their gazes flitting across the huge sack on her back and subconsciously flashing with fervour and envy.

“Lady Beye, Marshal Whitenight, Marshal Rundstedt has been awaiting your return. He was hoping to see you as soon as you returned!” one of them said respectfully.

“I understand,” she answered dully, “I still have some things to do, so we’ll meet tomorrow morning.”

The name Rundstedt sounded familiar to Richard. As they walked up to a circular plaza behind the gates, he suddenly remembered where he had heard it and asked in shock, “Is Rundstedt the Tumon Dukedom’s Lance of Annihilation?”

Beye nodded, “That’s him. Without a legendary being in charge, we wouldn’t be able to guard the capital of the Unsetting Sun.”

He went quiet for a moment before asking a question that had been on his mind over the past few days, “Are we doing very badly in the Land of Dusk?”

“Haven’t you seen enough the past few days?” Beye shot back.

Richard grew silent once more. The answer to his question had been made very obvious over the past ten days. They had been teleported within the vicinity of the capital of the Unsetting Sun, but along the way they had to kill nearly fifty powerhouses from Daxdus while they had met less than ten friendly troops from Norland.

“There are a total of eleven strongholds that are about the same level as this in the Land of Dusk. However, only three belong to us,” she added unenthusiastically.

It was a simple ratio, but one that weighed heavily in the mind.

After crossing the little plaza, the two came upon a stepped road that was nearly fifty metres wide. It was inclined towards the gates of the second layer of walls, both sides filled with lofty stone buildings some of which were more than ten floors high. However, the entire city was lifeless. Outside of a few saints flying in the distance, there was no sense of activity at all.

Beye did not fly, treading firmly on the ground. Richard followed behind, surveying the surroundings as they went. The view wasn't all that good, mainly because the stairs and barriers were far too high for him. He was as tall as the normal adult male, but his line of sight was constantly blocked. All he could see were rocks of various sizes, having to intentionally look up or turn his neck to observe something.

He could tell that this wasn't built by humans at all, nor did it seem to be the style of any of Norland's other main races. The architecture was vast, majestic, and sharp. The rocks used in the construction were solid and compact, and the occasional statues looked like they had survived millennia of erosion from wind and rain. Every storey of the buildings here was over six metres high, meaning the original inhabitants were at least three metres tall. This place actually seemed rather befitting of Norland's ogres.

The style of the statues and other architecture showed that whatever race had left these things behind were both cautious and magnificent, with the blood of steel yet no less meticulous for it. They had travelled far on the road of civilisation. Their glory was evident everywhere he looked.

And yet, this city so large it could house a hundred thousand people was nothing more than a ghost town now. Even despite the long river of history separating them, the destruction of this race made him feel suffocation and despair. He understood Beye's intentions in walking. Only on foot could he truly understand the silent desolation of this capital.

It wasn't long before the two reached the second layer of walls, past which the city grew a little more lively. Powerhouses could now be seen walking or flying around every once in a while, with stalls opened at the sides of the path. However, most of the stalls were closed, and the other buildings that lined the path were mostly empty as well.

"The owners of these shops are people like me," Beye explained, "They're likely outside hunting, or they're already dead. If a shop is closed too long, you can just break the door open and take it for yourself. Of course, there's no point to it. The closed shops don't have anything inside, and there are plenty of empty places on this street."

The capital of the Unsetting Sun did not have any regular people, only lunatics like Beye. There were those who wanted to make a fortune, others who were tired of life or felt they had no chance of going further and here to feel that deranged bloodlust one last time. Some wished to seek a breakthrough on the brink of death. Thus, the population of this city was dismal. All gathered together, it had only a thousand residents.

In such a situation, it would be impossible to find someone to watch a stall on one's behalf.

Beye suddenly turned and entered a shop by the road. The place had no merchandise, its wall empty and a thick layer of dust accumulated on the wooden counter. An old man in mage robes was sitting behind, completely focused on a tattered magic tome in his hands. There was an old table and two chairs in front of him, likely used to entertain customers.

"I'm here again, old man," Beye tossed her sack onto the table. The mage looked up, revealing a face full of wrinkles and a messy white beard that fell all the way down to his chest. The crystal spectacles perched on his nose were covered in fingerprints and oil, but he seemed too lazy to wipe them off.

He stood up unsteadily, speaking with a voice like an owl's, "Beye? You're not dead yet? That's definitely something I cannot celebrate."

"There are many who feel the same way," Beye answered nonchalantly, "And there will be many more in the future. Just see what my stuff is worth."

The old man walked out from behind the counter and pointed at the ground, "Do you actually want me to help you move the items?"

Beye just picked up the bag and tossed it on the ground, holding it by a corner and shaking lightly. All sorts of materials were thus strewn across the ground, including the organs that she had frozen in a dark green ice to keep fresh.

The old mage made no move at first, eyes flitting across the materials on the ground before then focusing entirely on her. His gaze kept shifting between her waist and legs.

The scene left Richard quite confused; this fellow might have been a terrifying grand mage once or some such thing, but now he seemed to only be level 12 or 13 with his aura very weak. He was obviously dying. Given Beye's temper, one didn't even need to speak; just the wrong gaze alone could convince her to kill. The fact that she was enduring this old geezer's lecherous gaze meant there was a story behind this.

However, it was a story he did not know; he naturally wouldn't stick out on her behalf. He instead stood silently at the side; the waters were too deep in the Battlefield of Despair, and he did not yet qualify to participate.

Beye turned a blind eye to the old man's gaze, standing peacefully where she was. However, that only made him increasingly brazen; his eyes were beginning to show an unconcealable desire.

At this point, Richard was slightly shocked. Beye was incredibly

tall, much taller than himself as he was now and able to match most male powerhouses. Her face was rather unique, her eyebrows and pupils so white they could not be seen at all. She had great features that would make her a beauty; long legs, slender waist, perfect curves... and no breasts to speak of. Still, all that wasn't important; the key fact was that she was fierce and peerless, possessing a strong aura of blood. Getting in bed with a goddess of murder like her required a strong mind. He believed his own was strong enough, but without a good reason he wouldn't attempt to seduce her even if he hadn't felt a woman's touch in a year.

Book 4, Chapter 10 - Mana Armament

The old mage stared at Beye for a long time, displaying an extravagant desire that Richard could not agree with before he eventually tidied up what she had thrown to the ground. He started rummaging through the loot, shouting every once in a while, “Aha, the eyeball of a draconic reptilian? Good stuff... What’s this? Damn it, the ice is too thick, don’t waste my strength! Let’s see what’s inside... Hmm... heart of a centaur captain, not bad! What, you have the heart but not the backbone? Such a waste...”

The geezer mumbled on and on, sifting through most of the materials and tossing them to one side. He suddenly picked up a blue crystal and shouted, “The soul crystal of an ursa warlord! And it’s the highest quality at that!” He immediately looked up, eyes filled with protestation as he exclaimed in a sharp, urgent voice, “Where are the member and sperm vesicles? You have the soul crystal, so how could you not have gotten the other two?”

“I accidentally stepped on it and smashed it,” Beye stated dully.

The old mage jumped in front of her, grabbing her by the chest and practically spitting saliva at her face, “You smashed them? Don’t you know it’s the most treasured part of an ursa warlord? There are only so many that can be killed every year, and you SMASHED it?!”

She nonchalantly freed herself, speaking in her signature cold voice, “I don’t know how precious it is, but I do know an old man like you can’t get hard without it. If you want me to cash in that promise, I can do it anytime.”

The man’s entire body trembled with anger, his voice growing extremely loud, “I won’t let things be so easy for you! The capital of the Unsetting Sun is huge, I don’t believe I can’t buy the vesicles of an ursa warlord!”

Beye flashed a terrifying little smile, “I don’t believe there’s anyone who dares to sell, however. I’ve already announced that I’ll grind the balls of anyone who does that with a skaven’s molars.”

“You...” The mage was so furious he was nearly gasping, to the point that Richard started to think he would just die. Still, he was much stronger than Richard had expected, vulgarly grabbing Beye’s crotch before he crouched down and continued to pick through the materials.

The scene left Richard startled. Beye hadn’t dodged or even retaliated. She seemed to notice the question in his eyes, explaining in a calm voice, “This is one of the prices of selling materials here.”

Richard didn’t feel like she needed to explain this to him. However, the fact that she was willing to pay this price meant this old man definitely wasn’t an easy character. Or at least, he hadn’t been one in the past.

It wasn’t long after before the man was done checking the materials, heading behind the counter to open a cabinet. Beye suddenly grabbed the centaur heart and threw it towards him, “Treat this as something from the little guy.”

“How generous!” The old mage gave Richard a quick look, asking bluntly, “What, is this kid making you feel good?”

Beye actually nodded, “He’s young and fresh, and quite big too.”

Richard immediately felt faint.

The geezer glared at Richard with eyes full of poison, but he didn’t say anything else. He took out two sacks, one larger than the other, pouring out quite a few magic crystals from it into the smaller one. After weighing it, he tossed it to Richard, “Take it, kid. Anyone who dares to touch Beye isn’t ordinary. I hope you’ll live a little longer; if you’re in the capital of the Unsetting Sun again in the future and I’m still alive, you can look for me.”

Richard flashed a glance at Beye, who replied, “You deserve this. Take it.” He didn’t decline further, stowing the crystals away. The large sack in her hand disappeared as well, stashed into her spatial ring.

Before they could leave, however, the old mage suddenly glanced at Richard. His murky eyes shone with light for a moment, making Richard feel as though every part of him from head to toe had been seen through, as though every cell had been examined! The light disappeared immediately after, but he was left in a cold sweat, not knowing if he was allowed to get angry. The one thing he was sure of was the fact that this was not detection magic, but it still left him feeling very uneasy.

“Wait!” the man stopped them, heading behind the counter before taking out three pieces of hide from a dusty sack. He passed them to Richard, “Kid, if you promise to get me the member and vesicles of an ursa warlord when you’re strong enough, this will be yours!”

Richard was filled with doubt as he took the hide and glanced over it, finding spots of white and grey. His first reaction was surprise. This was likely leather from a deep-sea animal called the star-spotted magic fish, and was a material that could be used to make grade 3 runes. There were sketches of magic arrays drawn on it, with some annotations and explanations written down inside square boxes. He could tell that this was a rune blueprint at first glance, but he had never even heard of it before.

The name of the rune was written in Norland’s common language at the top of the design. “Mana Armament,” he read out in a whisper.

This rune was obviously grade 3, but about a third of it was just blank space. Interested, he turned to the second piece of hide and found that it was the same rune, but with much of the blank space filled. This version was more complicated than the last, making it as difficult to craft as any other grade 4 rune.

Basically all of the space had been filled by the last piece of paper, leaving behind a small blank the size of three fingernails. The difficulty of the entire rune rose once more, and if not for the incompleteness Richard even suspected it would be a grade 5 rune. However, it was hard to tell how much power the rune could bring out with those three empty spots.

In the eyes of runemasters, these three designs were priceless treasures. This was especially true for a freak like Richard, whose skills were exquisite but were held back by his mana pool. His hands were already beginning to tremble, but he still didn't agree to the old mage's request right away. He instead looked at Beye; this deal was obviously targeting her.

Beye glanced at the three pieces of hide and sneered, "You're willing to part with that?"

The old mage snorted and glared at her hard, not saying a word. In turn, she nonchalantly waved her arms, "Agree to it. He'll be dead in a few years anyway."

Having gotten her consent, Richard agreed and stashed the three rune designs carefully.

Seeing that the deal was confirmed, a trace of slyness suddenly flashed in the old mage's eyes. He stroked his messy beard and laughed, "I'm sorry to say this, Beye, but you've finally miscalculated things! Haha!"

Beye's expression changed slightly, but she said nothing more and pulled Richard along to leave.

After they left the old man's shop, they continued along towards the highest point in the city. Along the way, she explained the circumstances, "That old man is called Lawrence. Twenty years ago, when he was still a runemaster, everyone called him Saint Lawrence."

Richard was startled, "Saint Lawrence? He was a saint

runemaster?”

She nodded, “Yes. Although he has only made one grade 5 rune in his life, there wasn’t any grade 4 rune he could not make as long as he had the design and materials. In its most difficult of times, one of the main reasons this place could hold on was his presence. Without him pumping out high-grade runes without pause, the guards here would not have been able to hold back the crazed attacks from Daxdus.”

While he’d only made one grade 5 rune, that was still something extraordinary. If someone like him was in Norland, he would surely have a superior status. ‘Why would he root himself in a dangerous place like the Unreachable Battlefield?’ Richard wondered.

Beye continued, “Twenty years ago, he fought a great battle with a legendary mage from Daxdus. Although he managed to kill his opponent, he returned with grave injuries. His mana pool drained out, forcing him to drop to level 10 in a single year. Things became stable after that, but he couldn’t even compare to a regular mage in terms of how fast he advanced. His bodily functions had been damaged too; he lost the steady hands of a runemaster.

“Now, he’s surviving as a shopkeeper. Since he was the only saint runemaster who had been willing to help for a long period of time in the Land of Dusk, many people here have received his assistance or... erm, torture before. Thus, although he’s lost his abilities, many still come to make trades in his shop. After all, he was once a saint runemaster and legendary mage. Just a few words of direction from him have allowed people to progress greatly. Then there are those like me... here to repay his kindness.”

Richard found it a little difficult to link that lecherous old man with a saint runemaster and legendary mage. However, he wouldn’t ask what kind of favour Beye owed him that she would tolerate his harassment and still continue to sell materials to his shop. Being curious in the case of a killer like her was suicidal.

“Why not return to Norland?” he asked. If Lawrence went back, his sheer knowledge would net him treatment no worse than a grandmaster’s. Why hole himself up in a small shop like this like an old, destitute pervert?

This time, Beye sighed, “He’s been here for 300 years and can’t bring himself to leave. He said that he’d rather rot away in this city that he fought bravely for most of his life than return to Norland and enjoy a luxurious funeral.”

Richard went quiet. He couldn’t quite empathise with those feelings, but he could at least understand how heavy they were.

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